Quaker Religious Thought

The Quaker Interpretation of the Significance of Christ

Maurice A. Creasey

COMMENTS

By Harold E. Walker, O. Theodor Benfey, and Douglas V. Steere

Volume I, Number 2
Autumn 1959

Reprint Edition
50 cents

QUAKER RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

Volume I, Number 2 (Reprint Edition) Autumn 1959

Sponsored by the Quaker Theological Discussion Group

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

J. Calvin Keene, *Editor*
Edward A. Manice, *Circulation Manager*
O. Theodor Benfey
Lewis Benson
Kenneth Boulding
Thomas S. Brown
Maurice A. Creasey
Ruth E. Durr
Elsa F. Keene
Douglas V. Steere
Charles F. Thomas
Wilmer A. Cooper, *ex officio*

Additional copies of this issue can be obtained by sending 50¢ for each copy to Edward A. Manice, 380 Yale Station, New Haven, Conn. Persons wishing to have their names added to the Quaker Theological Discussion Group can do so by sending $2.00 to the above address. Persons sympathetic to this endeavor are invited to make contributions to it in any amount. These will be gratefully received.

Editorial

Arising out of a concern of several Friends to make possible continuing discussion of religious issues of interest to Quakers, the Quaker Theological Discussion Group came into existence in 1957. The general purpose of this organization was expressed as follows:

> The objective is not to formulate a Quaker creed but to explore more fully the meaning and implications of our Quaker faith and religious experience. This should include both an historical and contemporary approach, and should be concerned with both the content and the application of our faith.

Widespread interest greeted the formation of this new Friends' organization. Its steering committee, meeting in Kirkridge in the Autumn of 1958, decided that one way to further the concern expressed above was by issuing a semi-annual journal of Quaker thought. The first issue, which appeared in the spring of this year, carried an article by Howard Brinton and three comments on the article by as many Friends. With this current issue the publication is taking a big step forward by appearing for the first time in printed, pamphlet form. It is planned to publish in this form each spring and autumn, following in content the practice of printing a major article along with several comments by qualified persons and the author's reply to these comments.

The steering committee of the Quaker Theological Discussion Group includes these Friends: Wilmer A. Cooper, *chairman,* Edward A. Manice, *treasurer,* Hugh Barbour, Lewis Benson, Thomas S. Brown, Maurice A. Creasey, Chris Downing, T. Canby Jones, J. Calvin Keene, Arthur O. Roberts, David O. Stanfield, and Charles F. Thomas. Chairmen for arranging conferences of the Discussion Group are: for the East, John H. Curtis; for the West, Charles F. Thomas. Editor of the *Quaker Theological Newsnotes,* which carries items of interest to members of the Discussion Group, is Wilmer A. Cooper.

J. C. K.

The Quaker Interpretation of the Significance of Christ

MAURICE A. CREASEY

A true appreciation of Quakerism in any of its aspects must do justice to its close historical, religious, and theological relations to the Renaissance and to the Reformation. Like the twin shares of a mighty plough, these great movements of the spirit of man—or should we not rather say "of the Spirit in man"?—prepared a rich soil in which there flourished good grains, though not without many weeds! From our particular point of view, perhaps the most important result of the Renaissance and the Reformation was the recovery of a sense of the central significance of Christ for Christian life, faith, and thought. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to expect that succeeding generations, in so far as they were heirs of the Reformation, would be largely concerned with the task of interpreting that significance in relation to the particular features of their contemporary interest and environment.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a vast extension of men's knowledge of their environment. Geographical explorations and discoveries, together with the discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, gave to men an altogether new conception of the vastness, mystery, and rationality of the universe. It was therefore almost inevitable that, before long, questions concerning the relation of Christ to this vastly extended and altered context should suggest themselves. Just as in the first Christian century we can detect the way in which the significance of Jesus Christ was interpreted in environments of ever-increasing comprehensiveness, so in the century following Luther we may see the development of a situation which cried out for a similarly extended and comprehensive interpretation of the rediscovered significance of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We may, perhaps, express in some such way as this the questions to which men at that time were seeking answers: How can that Person who lived on earth among men be one with that Presence who is known and reverenced in the worship and obedience of Christians today? And how are we to reconcile the supreme exaltation which Christian devotion and doctrine have ever accorded to him, with the fact that the great majority of men have lived and died in ignorance of him? If he is the sole Mediator between God and men, is his mediation confined to those who, in the providence of God, have heard and believed the historical knowledge of the Gospel? Or is it conceivable that he is, in fact, the Mediator for all men everywhere, in every age, even though they may not have been given the privilege of knowing him explicitly?

Unhappily, the direction taken by the main stream of Christian thought at that time was not one which led toward answers to these questions. The ever-increasing refinements and subtleties of Lutheran and Reformed theology, still working in the main with scholastic presuppositions and within a mediaeval metaphysical framework, became increasingly out of touch with the religious experience and needs of the age.

But the outlines of a conception of the meaning of Christ which eluded some of the wise and learned were gradually becoming clear to some individuals and groups, of whom early Friends were not the least significant. Working with suggestions which in fact (and more than some of them recognized) were derived from the Pauline and Johannine writings in the New Testament, they began to interpret the significance of Jesus Christ in terms which suggested answers to these great questions and were intimately bound up with moral and spiritual insight and experience.

EARLY QUAKER TEACHINGS CONCERNING CHRIST

It is, of course, generally recognized that the central and distinctive doctrine or conception of Quakerism is its doctrine of "the inner light." But it is less generally recognized that the features of this doctrine which are truly distinctive of Quakerism are those which result from the Quaker attempt to express, in terms of this doctrine, a profound interpretation of the person

and work of Christ. It is thus a Christological rather than an anthropological doctrine. Or, to put it otherwise, it interprets man's psychological and spiritual nature as made in the "image of God" in terms of his response to the universal, creative, revelatory, and redemptive activity of Christ who is "the image of the invisible God."

There can be no question, I think, that this was recognized quite clearly and explicitly by early Friends: the evidence for it is scattered over almost every page of their writings. I must restrict myself to one or two examples. In a tract published in 1677 with the remarkably comprehensive title, *To all the Kings, Princes and Governors in the whole world: and all that profess themselves Christians, and others,* Fox quotes several verses from the prologue of the Fourth Gospel and continues:

> And that was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, to wit, the Life that is in the Word, which was before anything was made. . . . And Christ saith "Believe in the Light, that ye may become Children of the Light. . . ." And so, by belief in the Spiritual, Heavenly and Divine Light . . . they came and come to be grafted into Christ, the Heavenly Root that bears them, and so become Children of the Light. So here you may see Christ Jesus, the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, who is the Light of the World . . . and the same Light which lets you see all your sins, will also let you see your Saviour Christ Jesus.

In a later pamphlet, dated 1689, and entitled *Concerning the antiquity of the People of God called Quakers, . . .* Fox speaks of Christ who

> hath given us a Light, which is the Life in himself: and saith believe in the Light, so we Believe in that which Christ hath given us . . . namely, the Light, which is the Life in him, by which we may see him, . . . and this Light shining in our hearts, it gives us the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Christ Jesus . . . having the witness in ourselves that God is true in all his Promises and Prophets, and Types and Shadows in the law, concerning his Son, Christ Jesus. . . .

Let me now quote from another early Quaker writing, the *Vindication of the Principles and Practices of the People called Quakers,* written by George Bishop in 1665. In this tract he deals with the question, "What mean you by the word Light, and the Light within you? do you by this only intend every man's particular Natural Reason, or what else? And how do you distinguish this from conscience?" In his answer Bishop says:

> By the word Light, and the Light within, we mean Christ the light. . . . Now this is not Natural Reason . . . but when we speak of the Light and this Light within, we only intend Christ; the light of Christ; Christ the light; the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the World; which Reason is not. . . . Of this we speak; and we mean nothing else when we speak of the Light, and this Light within.

Such quotations—and they could be multiplied almost endlessly—surely put beyond doubt two important facts. First, that for early Friends all that they said about the Light they intended to be understood as being said about Christ; and second, that when they spoke of Christ they meant a Christ whose activity in relation to the world of men comprehended all that which in the New Testament and in the main stream of Christian doctrine was normally distributed among the Logos or Word or Son, the historic Jesus Christ, the risen and glorified Christ, and the Holy Spirit. However difficult it may be for us, there can be no doubt that this comprehensive use of the word "Christ" was for early Friends the result of a fresh, vivid, and flexible interpretation of the "Mystery" of Christ.

But it is also very clear from the controversial writings of the early Friends that this flexible and comprehensive usage was a source of endless confusion and recrimination. To most of their contemporaries, early Friends appeared to be doing two things. On the one hand, they seemed to be claiming for "the Light" a sovereign significance which, to those for whom "the Light" meant only the light of reason or of conscience, was clearly preposterous. On the other hand, they seemed to be emptying the word "Christ" of its primary historic reference, employing it to confuse all the precisely defined theological categories and to undermine the orthodox scheme of salvation.

To the Quaker leaders of the seventeenth century, however, the contemporary witness to Christ seemed both narrow and shallow. In was narrow, they felt, in that it seemed to minimize or even ignore the deep truth of Christ's relation to Creation and, therefore, to every man. It moved, on the whole, within a field defined by the Calvinistic doctrines of Election, Predestination, Effectual Calling, and Final Perseverance. It exhibited little or no concern for "the heathen," in whose final doom it seemed blandly acquiescent. It showed little awareness of the present reality of the Lordship of Christ, and by its uncritical acceptance of social, political, economic, and military methods went far to empty that Lordship of practical significance. It was shallow, too, in that it often tended to content itself with an intellectual apprehension of doctrine rather than to require a deep and thorough transformation of the whole personality by obedience to the leading of the Spirit of Christ. When it did emphasize "holiness," this often tended to be conceived in a narrowly pietistic sense which had in it not a little of a sub-Christian asceticism.

As against such interpretation of the meaning of Christ, the early Quakers proclaimed one which was both more "extensive" and also more "intensive." The Christ of whom they taught was the Christ through whom and unto whom were all things; the Christ whose light shone in every human heart, whose voice spoke in every demand of conscience and every prompting toward love and truth. The service of Christ so conceived demanded the patient acceptance of obloquy and suffering, and under no circumstances permitted their infliction upon others. He was to be served in all the ways of common life, in simplicity and gentleness, integrity and love. All customs and practices, however deeply rooted in traditions and sanctioned by usage, were to be brought under the judgment of Christ and, at no matter what cost, were to be broken with if loyalty to him seemed so to require. Those who so knew Christ, knew themselves to have been delivered not only from the penalty of sin but also from its power. And they found themselves gathered into a community in which were to be known in reality, in daily living, both the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and the power of Christ's resurrection.

MAIN FEATURES OF EARLY QUAKER INTERPRETATION

The clear impression left upon one's mind after a study of the early Quaker understanding of Christ is that of the profound sense which those early Friends had of the supreme and all-embracing significance of Christ as the Power and Wisdom of God in creation, in revelation, and in redemption. So great was their emphasis upon this singleness and wholeness and unity that they tended to minimize anything that seemed to imply distinction or discontinuity. In every age and in relation to every man, Christ, they believed, had exercised these same functions: the only difference lay in the mode of their exercise, whether in Christ's pre-incarnate, incarnate, or risen and glorified states. Let me now briefly illustrate this.

First, in regard to the work of the *pre-incarnate Christ.* In numberless passages, the opening verses of the Fourth Gospel and the great Christological passages in Colossians I are quoted and are unhesitatingly applied to the Christ, who, in the fullness of time, took flesh and "dyed at Jerusalem." For all the early Quaker teachers, therefore, every intimation of conscience, every prompting of duty, every restraint from evil, every aspiration after good, however imperfect may have been the forms in which good or evil were conceived—all these, even in the experience of all men who lived before the coming of Christ in the flesh, are to be seen as the working of that Spirit of God, who, even then, was "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." This, surely, is no merely speculative doctrine of pre-existence, resting upon isolated texts, but rather, a strenuous attempt to interpret the whole moral and spiritual history of the race in terms of the divine character and purpose revealed in Christ. Christ's pre-incarnate activity here is not limited (as by so many of their contemporaries) simply to the creative and sustaining activity of the divine Logos in relation to the universe: rather, it is conceived, as from the beginning, a tireless, patient, seeking and bearing activity in relation to all men, suffering under their waywardness and rejoicing if any heeded the secret promptings of love and truth.

Second, we turn to the *incarnate Christ,* the Christ who "dyed at Jerusalem." As we might expect, there is on the part of most of the early Quaker writers a firmer grasp of the work of Christ as incarnate than of his Person. However inadequately

they may have understood the distinction between theophany and incarnation, they were at one with Melanchthon in believing that "to know Christ is to know the blessings he bestows." For Fox, the coming of Christ in the flesh was not only instrumental in effecting a universal extension of that revelatory and redemptive activity of God which had formerly been concentrated, so to speak, within the people of Israel; it was also of such crucial significance that it serves as the watershed of history, so that history, for Fox, may be divided into two great epochs—the "former times" and the "last days, or day, of Christ."

Barclay is only expressing in unambiguous language the common Quaker faith concerning the intimate connection between the historic Christ and the divine and universal light when he says this, in his tract on *Universal Love:*

> Neither do (they) suppose this seed, Word and Grace which is sufficient to lead to salvation, to be given to men without Christ; for they believe it to be the Purchase and Benefit of Christ's Death, who tasted Death for every Man; so that they confess all to be derived to them in and by Christ, the Mediator, to whom they ascribe all. Yea, they believe this Light, Grace and Seed to be no other, but a measure of that Life and Spirit that was in Christ Jesus; which being in Him, who is the Head, in the Fulness of it, is from Him (in whom it Resideth) as he is Ascended up into and Glorified in the Heavens, Extended to all Men, in order to Redeem them from sin, and convert them to God.

You will notice, I hope, that Barclay is here saying, not that you and I and Jesus and all other men are enlightened in our different measures by the one Divine Light which shines upon us all. He is saying something much more profound—and, for us moderns, something much more difficult—that Jesus Christ *is* in fact the Light which enlightens in our differing measures you and me and everyone else!

In the third place, let us look for a moment at the early Quaker understanding of the work of the *risen and exalted Christ,* in terms of what they—in common with many of their contemporaries—called "the Offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King." Fox characteristically interprets these Offices with

a bold simplicity: "How does he exercise his Offices in you, or amongst you?" Fox inquires:

> Christ is Counsellor: "do you hear His Voice from Heaven, concerning your Heavenly state?" He is a Shepherd: "Do you follow him? Do you know his Voice?" He is a Priest: "Do you feel his Blood sprinkling your Hearts, and his pure Water washing you?" He is a Prophet: "Do you hear him in all things? Doth he reveal the Father to you? Doth he open the Book of Conscience to you?" Christ is King: "Doth he rule in your hearts of Faith?"

But Fox does not merely ask these questions of individuals: it is fundamental to his conception of the "Offices" of Christ that they are exercised in and on behalf of the Church. It is this radical emphasis on the headship of Christ over his Church that forms the foundation of the Quaker conception of Worship, Sacraments, and Ministry. Since Christ alone as Prophet has the right to speak in his Church, the only acceptable worship, in spirit and in truth, will be that in which the worshippers wait for Christ to speak. This he may do secretly and silently, without uttered words; or he may move any one of the worshippers to utterance of prayer or praise or testimony, as he, who alone knows the condition of each person present, sees fit. Thus, ministry requires the creation of no separate "order," but is known in the exercise of a spiritual gift which may be bestowed upon any. It is a "ministry of the Word" in the sense that Christ, who is the Word, speaks through it. Further, the Quaker rejection of the Sacraments was not founded merely upon a negative doctrine of the rejection of all "forms" in the interests of a "purely spiritual" worship. It had a positive basis in the belief that, Christ's presence being capable of being known so truly in the gathered and worshipping group, no ceremony was needed to mediate it nor could ceremony make it more real. Christ's baptism, with Spirit and with fire, had superseded John's, and denoted an inner experience of cleansing and power. Where it was known inwardly, no outward baptism could add anything to it; where it was not so known, no outward ceremony could impart it.

It is clear, I believe, that early Friends' discontinuance of a pre-arranged order of worship, their refusal to limit to a specially ordained class the function of prophesying, their dispensing with sacramental observances which to practically all their contemporaries seemed to rest upon dominical authority—all this seemed to them to be obviously implied by the absolute right of the living Christ to discharge immediately his offices in his Church.

THREE OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF QUAKER INTERPRETATION

So far, I have been trying to bring before you some impression of the characteristic ways in which Quakerism in its creative beginnings understood and expressed the significance of Christ. I want now to indicate three features of this understanding which were, I believe, of outstanding importance. If we could but see them once again as the necessary implications of our faith as Friends, and could express them convincingly in life and in word, I believe we should be well on the way to that re-birth of faith which we all desire.

The first of these features is the resolute insistence that the fact of Christ must be valued, not so much for what it expresses concerning the nature of a particular man, as for what it reveals concerning the nature of God and his relations to every man. The truth appears to be that, much as most of their contemporaries glorified Christ in words and held the most orthodox doctrines concerning his Person, they seemed to feel no difficulty in holding these beliefs alongside a conception of God and of his relation to man which was scarcely Christianized at all. The Quaker, on the other hand, long before William Temple, had grasped the truth that the wise and important question is not so much "Is Christ divine?" as "What is God like?" and were thus committing themselves by the only kind of belief in Christ's divinity which, in the long run, really matters. By insisting as they did that the Light is the Light of Christ, and not simply an undefined divine illumination, they were surely saying that what God showed himself to be in Jesus Christ he eternally is in relation to all men. The love and compassion, the challenge and the demand, which were embodied and expressed in Jesus as the Christ were thus apprehended as present and active in and toward all men everywhere, at all times. Again, by insisting that

this divine light is not simply a part of the nature of man, not merely another name for reason or conscience, were they not, in their own way, trying to express the truth that what Professor H. H. Farmer has called the "constitutive claim" of God upon man is the very ground of man's humanity, and therefore cannot be simply identified with this or that aspect of his personality? Man is "personal" because, and only because, (in Farmer's words) "whether he knows it or not, whether he likes it or not, he stands right down to the innermost core and essence of his being in the profoundest possible relationship to God all the time in an order of persons." Such a relationship is universal in scope and saving in intention, Friends believed; and therefore they felt it possible to express their sense of it by such a phrase as "the universal Divine Light of Christ."

The second feature may be described, in a phrase, as a recovery of what Albert Schweitzer, in his great book *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* has called the "Christ-mysticism" of the New Testament. By this phrase Schweitzer intends, in the first place, to point the contrast with "God-mysticism," in the sense of a "direct becoming-one with the infinite creative will of God." The attempt to extract living religion from "pure Monistic God-mysticism" is "foredoomed to failure," Schweitzer argues; it is in union with Christ that "union with God is realised in the only form attainable by us."

In the second place, Schweitzer intended to designate that profound and subtle double perspective in which Christ is everywhere seen in the New Testament and which, as Schweitzer argues, has subsequently never been adequately maintained. Christ, in the New Testament, is seen as, at one and the same time, the One by whom the Kingdom of God is being established here and now in this world, and also the One through whom redemption from sin is bestowed and salvation assured.

What I have called the "extensive" and "intensive" aspects of the early Quaker teaching concerning Christ correspond, I believe, to these two emphases of Schweitzer's "Christ-mysticism." The one looks out upon the whole drama of creation and of history, and sees shining through it all that Light which, once and for all, is defined and focused in Jesus Christ. In this faith it interprets the whole drama, and looks and works for the day

when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of God and of his Christ. The other looks within, and seeks to know the reality of Christ's presence and redemptive power in the deepest recesses of personal life and relationships. It knows, too, that the coming of the Kingdom in the outward cannot be hastened save by the community of those in whose hearts its power is already recognized and obeyed. To sustain both these emphases simultaneously and in a living relationship, if Schweitzer is right, has scarcely ever been achieved since the earliest days of Christianity. Particularly since the Reformation, there has always been the fatal tendency to slide over, in the one direction, into what Schweitzer called "Kultur-protestantismus" or a shallow preaching of the "social gospel"; or, in the other direction, into pietism and a more or less crudely conceived evangelism. But early Friends did succeed—at any rate for a time—in holding together both emphases within a single living experience, and I believe they were able to do this by reason of their possession of a true insight into the significance of Jesus Christ.

The third feature of the early Friends' understanding of Christ is the one which determines the Quaker conception of the Church. Both "extensive" and "intensive" aspects of that understanding have important implications in this connection. Thus, to take the "extensive" aspect first, it is clear that the recognition of Christ as the eternal mode of being and activity of God in relation to the universe and to man, must warn us against an over-zealous attempt to confine his relationship to men within the bounds of any historical institution. If Christ has always had a people, and if the saving activity of Christ ranges more widely than the confines of the Christian Church in any of its historical forms, then it seems to follow that the idea of a "latent Church" (as Tillich calls it) must be taken seriously. Thus the Church must never be defined in such ways as would altogether ignore multitudes who, even without knowing it, are living under the patient and gentle discipline of the Spirit of Christ, but who, for one or other of a wide range of reasons, are unlikely ever to regard themselves or be regarded by others as being within the Christian Church.

On the other hand, this line of interpretation must also insist upon drawing the criteria of membership in the Church more stringently than they are wont to be drawn in the established Churches and denominations. Whereas they often appear content to embrace within the Church multitudes whose lives show no evidence of response to the discipline of discipleship, of being quickened into response and insight by Christ's Spirit, this line of interpretation points to the truth contained in the concept of the "gathered" Church. Whatever sacramental privileges are received or credal professions are made, membership in Christ's Church belongs ultimately to all those—and only those—who hear and obey his voice and manifest his Spirit.

LATER QUAKERISM AND ITS UNDERSTANDING OF CHRIST

So far, I have been mainly concerned to give an account of the ways in which Jesus Christ was interpreted by early Friends. I come now to refer briefly to the relation of all this to some significant features of the subsequent history of the Society.

As is well known, the Society as a whole has tended to follow one or other of two divergent directions. One of these is marked by emphasis upon the fact of the divine immanence in man, and by a stress upon the elements common to all "mystical" religious traditions. With this has usually gone some lack of appreciation of the uniqueness of the biblical and Christian revelation, a disparagement of Christian doctrine and a certain hesitation and embarrassment over the place which is to be assigned to Jesus Christ in the spiritual history of mankind. It has often been associated with a marked tendency towards Quietism and towards regarding silence, not as the essential preliminary and condition for worship which should include in itself vocal offerings of prayer and praise and exhortation, but rather as itself the essence of worship. So far as relations with other religious groups are concerned, Quakers who have been deeply influenced by this tendency often feel themselves closer to many non-Christian groups than to most Christian ones; and they tend to regard Quakerism as in some sense a refinement upon Christianity, a bridge between Christianity and those other religions which, because of their lack of emphasis upon historical revelation, are regarded as more "spiritual."

The other direction represented in the Society is that which leads towards a closer approximation, in doctrine and in practice, to the position of the majority of Protestant denominations. Here, the tendency has been to abandon the attempt to explore, interpret, and express that distinctive conception of Christ which the first Quaker leaders proclaimed by their doctrine of the Inward Light of Christ, and to adopt the language of Protestant evangelical orthodoxy. Along with this there has been a decreasing emphasis upon, and understanding of, the place of silence in worship. Ministry has tended to be regarded increasingly as the function of a particular member of the meeting, who thus comes to be, to all intents and purposes, a "minister of religion" in the usual Protestant sense of the term. The outreaching service of these groups has usually taken the form of missionary work which differs little in method or aim from that of other Protestant missions.

This "bifurcation" in Quaker history—written large across the Society, and reproduced in miniature within the membership of many Meetings—has been assisted, of course, by many "non-theological factors." But its origin is to be sought, I believe, in the tensions which resulted from the attempt to express a profound insight into the meaning of divine revelation in Jesus Christ in the language of "inner light," in terms that were not really adequate to give expression to it. Adequate terms were not, indeed, available in the seventeenth century—nor are they yet. But there are grounds for believing that the general tendency of Christian thought during the last three centuries has been in a direction which offers possibilities of a fresh and creative wrestling with this mystery. The attempts of early Friends were, it may be thought, naive, even crude and premature. But I believe it has become clear that their faces were turned in the right direction, and that the most promising suggestions are those which result from our faithfully pursuing paths which they, in modern times, were among the first to mark out.

Christ as "corner-stone," or as a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence"—here is the crucial question, as I believe, which faces us as Friends today. Quakerism took its rise in a vision of the breadth and depth of the loving purpose and initiative of God as these are revealed in Jesus Christ and made effectual in

the age-long dialogue of his Spirit with the spirit of man. The original Quaker conception of Christ, like that of the New Testament as a whole, with extraordinary profundity and flexibility was able to hold together both the concrete and the universal, the historical and the mystical emphases. Unhappily, this vision has to a large extent faded from amongst us, and the component elements of that comprehensive conception have fallen apart. Thus it has come to pass, that some Friends feel called to stress one side, some to stress the other, and they do this, not realizing that each requires the other to give it validity and meaning.

Our greatest need, I believe, as a religious Society, is that we should give our best, in prayer, in obedience, and in thought, so that it may be given to us again to see and to express, in relation to the needs of the present day, this tremendous vision of Christ.

Comments

HAROLD E. WALKER

Three "Bravos!" for Maurice Creasey who has rendered a helpful service in this article. Our Society greatly needs such interpretative and discussion materials. I am personally grateful to him and stimulated by his writing. There is so much good in this article that one is reluctant to raise questions about it or even offer suggestions.

Early Friends found the Inner Light to be a reality in personal experience and they witnessed to it with the assurance that it could be realized by all. It was imparted to every man and Friends were confident that it was never withheld. This concept is the property of all Christendom. The early Protestant Reformers recognized the concept of an Inner Light and were led by it, but they were frequently unwilling to trust this Inner Light in other men. Friends tried to bring all of life under its controlling power for they felt it was an adequate basis for church and society. They called others to walk in this same Light.

It is well to recognize, as Creasey does, that the doctrine of "The Inner Light" is Christological rather than anthropological. Misunderstanding at this point has often led to difficulty. However, I am not convinced that the "truly distinctive Quaker features are those which result from the attempted *expression*." It was the example of this doctrine experimentially realized in contemporary life that made such a dynamic witness to others. To be sure, early Friends tried to make it articulate and, like us today, found it very difficult to do so. The reality and power of the Inner Light was communicated to others by a living witness even without verbal expression and it was this which was distinctive and continues to be essential.

In the two paragraphs on the Church, I am left with a feeling of uncertainty as to the direction we as Friends should go.

Creasey raises some questions without giving us answers and I am not sure of the distinction he makes between Church and Kingdom of God.

If the Inner Light of the pre-incarnate Christ was universal —if it was the "essence of humanity"—how can we say it had formerly been concentrated within the people of Israel? Surely it must be for every man in all ages.

Regarding spiritual gifts and ministry, Barclay wrote:

> If it be understood of a liberty to speak or prophecy by the Spirit, I say all may do that, when moved thereunto . . . but we do believe and affirm that some are more particularly called to the work of the ministry, and therefore are fitted of the Lord for that purpose; whose work is more constantly and particularly to instruct, exhort, admonish, oversee, and watch over their brethren, etc.

Friends have always believed that such gifts should be released for the good of all. The pastoral meeting provides greater opportunity for the continuing use of such particular gifts. I heartily agree with the author when he says, "Ministry requires the creation of no separate 'order,' but is known in the exercise of a spiritual gift which may be bestowed upon any." But, as most of Christendom would give abundant proof, this does not imply that ministry which does operate through a separate order is invalid. It seems to me that we miss the major point of the Quaker emphasis regarding ministry when we discuss it on the basis of pastoral or non-pastoral practice. Let us emphasize the point that the church cannot make a minister; it can only recognize gifts where they exist and properly provide for their exercise and development as a bestowal of Christ, the Head of the Church. It is Christ alone who calls, ordains, and empowers his ministers, who are dependent upon the living Lord in preaching the Gospel. To quote Barclay:

> We are for a holy, spiritual, pure and living ministry, where the ministers are both called, qualified, and ordered, actuated and influenced in all the steps of their ministry by the Spirit of God; which being wanting, we judge they cease to be the ministers of Christ.

If we are going to take the practice of early Friends as a measuring stick, I believe a close examination of the materials will reveal that the early Friends' ministers were closer to a separate order than most of the ministers in pastoral meetings today. The kind of dynamic personal leadership they gave resulted in their being accorded prestige and power by the rest of the Society. It is quite clear that the early Friends' ministers were more directly under the supervision of George Fox than pastors are under a Yearly Meeting Superintendent today.

I am also concerned about the author's statement that the "Society as a whole has tended to follow one or other of two divergent directions." This appears to me to be lumpy thinking in which he attempts to lump too many variations into easily manageable categories. A large majority of the individuals whom the author would put into each of these two categories would object to certain aspects associated with the divergent in which they have been placed and would hold personal convictions regarding aspects of the opposite divergent.

Then too, it seems strange to suggest that the more mystical group of Friends, those who have placed greater emphasis upon the Inner Light, could be in better communion and fellowship with non-Christian groups than with Christian groups. If the Inner Light is Christ this is illogical. Of course if the Inner Light is not Christ there is real foundation for such relationship and communion. I do not mean to imply that we should not have fellowship with non-Christian groups, but only raise a question as to the suggested basis on which it is realized.

The author implies that neither of the two divergents he indicates is really true Quakerism. If I have understood him correctly and if there is validity in this position, then there is little point in continuing as a Society. Our mystical groups might just as well be some religious or philosophical club and our doctrinal groups might just as well become a part of one of the "Free" churches.

In contrast to this I would like to suggest a more optimistic view. There is much in modern Quakerism that is good and unique, combining the author's "extensive" and "intensive" elements in a manner similar to early Friends. I like Creasey's interpretation and use of the "extensive" and "intensive" meaning

of Christ. Granted also that there is much in our Society that is lacking in "spiritual power and vitality," I am not ready to throw it overboard. Of course, Creasey does not suggest this either! There are some real ministries being provided by Friends that are still on the religious frontiers. We continue to be pioneers in several areas. There is much in our Society that now conforms to other church groups, to be sure, but this is no handicap as long as we are doing our particular God-given task.

I recognize that the emphasis of this article is interpretative, yet I cannot refrain from saying that our many failures and even decadence have come, not so much from the lack or poorness of expression, but from a lack of commitment to the light of Christ in daily life. The success of early Friends lay not so much in "their possession of a (true?) insight into the significance of Jesus Christ," as Creasey suggests, but in their willingness to give themselves in utter trust and obedience to Christ the Light. We have the same insight today with the added benefit of 300 years of experience. It appears to me, therefore, that the desired renaissance of Quakerism will not be brought about by a better verbal formula regarding the Inner Light, helpful as that will be, but by a quickened spiritual life that is wholly committed to Christ.

Friends, we do not trust the Inner Light enough! We believe in Christ the Light. We have experienced this guiding enabling Light. Let us give ourselves to it in such obedience that our lives will shake the countryside for miles around!

O. THEODOR BENFEY

I have been helped so much by Maurice Creasey's thought and am in such fundamental agreement with it, that any comments I make are in the nature of footnotes, extrapolations or filling in of gaps, rather than disagreements.

First, I am not clear in what sense the phrase "The Quaker Interpretation . . ." is to be understood. According to my reading, Maurice Creasey equates it with the interpretation of early Friends. Later developments, he suggests, were narrower views, emphasizing one side or the other of what was once an organic whole. Nothing significant was added to our understanding of

Christ after the first two generations, in spite of our emphasis on continuing revelation.

Maurice Creasey, however, also points out that early Friends spoke to the condition of their own time by liberating Christian thought, in part, from medieval conceptions. Original Quakerism was a successful reinterpretation of fundamental Christianity in the thought forms of the seventeenth century. Are we to go back to the thought forms of that century in order to understand the full truth of Christianity? For *us* this may be the surest path to understanding what early Friends discovered, but to end with that discovery, to preach to people of the twentieth century the necessity of thinking in seventeenth century thought forms, is a denial of the spirit of original Quakerism. Was all Quaker thought after 1700 really only a narrowing of focus? Have Quakers of the nineteenth and twentieth century contributed nothing significant to the understanding of Christ, in spite of the enormous growth of man's knowledge of himself and nature through the sciences, both natural and social, and the humanities?

It seems to me that a Quaker interpretation of the significance of Christ must do for our century what early Friends did for theirs. We must interpret Christ in current thought forms, almost completely divorced now from medieval and even Newtonian absolutes. In Bonhoeffer's phrase, man has "come of age," he has found it possible to organize his experience of nature, of politics, of economics, of human personality, utilizing not the classical religious conceptions but instead conceptions most suited to the particular discipline. Bonhoeffer now suggests that the same step must be taken in religion. The data are human experiences and historical events and it is no longer required that experiences are related by human thought to absolutes. That does not necessarily make experiences subjective. Bonhoeffer proposes that the message of the historic and indwelling Christ, relived by us in words and deeds suitable to our time, can speak to the condition of men and women who have no conception of God or heaven or hell. Quakers, with their insistence on the primacy of religious experience, should be in the forefront of this experiential reinterpretation of Christianity. As relativity theory made it unnecessary to build the data of physics into a framework of absolute space and time, but insisted that all mean-

ingful concepts are related to human experiences, so religious thought must learn to base all its conceptions on human experience.

In addition to this "operationalist" revolution, modern man is dominated by another thought form, that of evolution. He insists on knowing how things came to be the way they are; he insists on understanding events in terms of their historical origins. The major lack in Maurice Creasey's presentation seems to be the complete absence of any account of Quaker teaching as to the origin of Jesus, of his development, and of the transformation, the process of "rebirth," made possible in other people through his life. Quakers did speak of these matters, and though their contribution to the "developmental" aspect of the significance of Christ may not be distinguished, absorbed as they largely were in the "timeless" aspect of personal religious experience, this aspect is needed for a full representation of the significance of Christ. It is not enough to equate the inward and the historical Christ, nor is it enough to reinterpret history in terms of Christ. As soon as Christ in history is posited, all the questions concerning the sense in which Christ was a historical personality rather than a divine apparition must be answered. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we are in an era comparable to that confronting Renaissance civilization when the original classic Greek manuscripts came to light. The historical context of Plato and Aristotle no longer could be ignored by Plato's and Aristotle's worshippers.

In what sense was Christ a historical personality? The answer to this must be "in every sense." He lived in history and therefore must be capable of being viewed with all the concepts and tools available to historical scholarship, divorced from any interpretation we may give to him from a theological framework. In historical terms, perhaps Boris Pasternak in his *Doctor Zhivago* comes close to a mature expression of the significance of Christ. Christ was the first fully individual man, the first free personality in history. And thereby he changed the course of history. Historically he was the first of a new era because the old, communal era had played itself out and had demonstrably failed to achieve its high ethical goals. The insatiable curiosity and high dedication initially inherent in healthy personalities,

forced someone in a high ethical community to forge a new path to its goals.

Maurice Creasey also says nothing of the "mechanism" of rebirth engendered by the experience of the indwelling Christ, or the conditions conducive to it, even though the Journals of Friends dwell at length on their conversion period. Here certainly is an area where the Quakers have much to contribute to modern psychological thought.

One of our most important tasks as Christians is to learn not to mix the symbols of different intellectual disciplines. In view of Friends' traditional eminence in science, Friends should be able to help clarify the significance of Christ by viewing him from the viewpoint of those disciplines on which he makes an impact. If Jesus was in truth a person who lived in history as well as he who in theological terms was the Son of God, then not only our understanding of God and man and history will be illumined by him, but the disciplines that grapple with the fact of Christ will be forced to modify their concepts in coming to terms with him. The fact of Christ historically and inwardly experienced may yet be the focus around which the fragmented areas of human knowledge will be unified. Theology as the Queen of the Sciences lost her realm because she attempted to rule the world of experience with absolutes. The humble babe born in a manger may yet achieve what classical theology failed to accomplish.

DOUGLAS V. STEERE

I have always envied Descartes his ingenuity in sending out his meditations to his principal critics with a request for their objections and then printing those objections together with his own answers to them in the initial edition of the meditations. And now Calvin Keene's Cartesian mind has proposed the same procedure in which I gladly comply.

In this article, Maurice Creasey has seemed to seek an irenic resolution of the problems that divide Friends when it comes to the issue of what they make of Jesus Christ. He expresses in it an almost primitivist nostalgia for the first period of Quakerism where it is suggested that these present differences did not exist

and where there was a simultaneous acceptance of the pre-incarnational, the incarnational, and the resurrected Christ.

The serpent in this Eden, it is declared near the close of this article as well as on page 26 of Maurice Creasey's earlier contribution to the pamphlet *The Next Fifty Years,* has been the "mystical" interpretation of the Quaker experience which has tended to minimize the significance of the historical element in Christianity, to minimize the uniqueness of Christ, to neglect the Bible, and to maximize the immanence of the inner light in man, to consort with the non-Christian religions, and to see in the silent meditation in Quakerism a bridge between Christianity and these religions.

At the other pole in its divergence from this early longed-for Christocentric Quaker conception, Maurice Creasey finds the contemporary disciples of Gurneyism whose evangelical approach culminates in the pastoral system, in conventional evangelical missionary work, and in a relapse into Protestant Evangelical orthodoxy. He concludes with the hope that contemporary Quakerism, caught as it is in the cross-fire and bifurcation of these two sterile movements, may rediscover the creative crossing of the historical and the mystical elements and believes that only in a fresh underlining of the Christocentric character of Quakerism is there any hope for such a renewal.

I for one could not agree more completely in the matter of Quakerism forever living in a crossing of the mystical and the historical fields of force within the Christian stream. I am also aware that Maurice Creasey stands in a generation that feels itself bound to re-assert (and to re-assert vehemently) the role of the historical (often called "prophetic") —so vehemently in fact, that the mystical is in real danger of being excessively down-graded. At the same time I see many signs in Maurice Creasey's article, as in his other writings, of a profound appreciation of the inner mystical side of the Quaker experience, the side whose loss would for me turn Quakerism into just another non-conformist Protestant division and rob it of its very birthright.

Maurice has made no secret of his identifying Rufus Jones with this "mystical" dilution of Quakerism, and at the same time he has found in John Wilhelm Rowntree, Rufus Jones's dearest friend, the apostle of the biblical, Christ-centered Quakerism

which Maurice feels called to re-establish. What puzzles me is that in selecting Rufus Jones as the adversary, he has not tried to see the historical context in which Rufus Jones fought his battle for the renewal of Quakerism and has consistently failed to see the deep devotion to Jesus Christ which marked Rufus Jones's own Quaker approach.

The first twenty years of Rufus Jones's struggle that carried over well into this century, were spent in fighting the dead stereotype of frontier revivalism that was eating the true life out of Quakerism in America and was leaving a frozen product that lacked the fresh surge of creative discipleship and fearlessness before the creative world and its unfolding which he had known in his own family and in his own Quaker meeting. This revivalism used all of the Christocentric language that is being revived by many Friends today. Rufus Jones found, as many of us who know this revivalist stereotype at first hand know all too well, the sterilizing effect of its touch, and he raised before it the touchstone of a growing experience of God, of the release of the springs of life in men, of a life that was tender, more at the Divine disposal, more loving, and more in the process of continual inward renewal. I have always suspected that his struggles with what he believed to be the specious use of Christocentric language, tended to make him scrupulously careful in his own refrences to Christ. Yet when I read a passage on the role of Jesus Christ like the following, I find little in it that I believe Maurice Creasey's conception of John Wilhelm Rowntree or that Maurice himself would have cared to alter:

> Christ for the (Christian) mystic is the Eternal Lover, the Bridegroom of souls. He is the crown and culmination of divine revelation, and in His life and person He has forever made visible and vocal in our world the mind, the will, the heart, the character of God. He is an eternal manifestation of God, striking his being into bounds at a definite period of history, being born in human form in time and space, living a life of limitless love and forgiveness and going the way of the cross in unspeakable agony of suffering that He might forever show the consummate way of the spiritual life, and finally triumphing over defeat and death

> in a resurrection which proves Him to be a new type and order of spiritual life. He is thus the head of a new race, the first of a new series, the founder of a new Kingdom, the revealer of a new way of living. His divine love wooing, pleading, appealing, enduring all things, suffering with those who sin, and sharing the common tragedies of life with us, is the power unto salvation for all who understand and see its significance. To be saved, then, would be to live by the impact and inspiration of His life, to feel the appeal of His personality, the contagion of His spirit, the drawing force of His unspeakable love, the operation of His invisible and eternal presence within, making the old life impossible and recreating in the inner man a new will, a new heart, a new mind and a new natured self, so that the old self with its instinctive tendencies no longer lives, but Christ at the center as the force and spring of action, makes all things new.
>
> (*Later Periods of Quakerism,* pp. xvi and xvii)

This I have set down here in order in some small measure to set the record straight. The problem that Maurice puts, however, is still before us: "What does Quakerism make of Christ?" Here Maurice has admitted with great frankness the readiness with which early Friends conceived of the pre-incarnational Christ "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" as well as the resurrected Christ. He has depicted them as acknowledging freely how this inward Christ plays freely not only on the *patent* but also on the *latent* church, that is, on men of all religions and even on those of no religion at all, on those who have never heard the word of Christ, and on those who, like the German working class, have seen his name associated with an institution so official that they honorably repudiate such a travesty. A Catholic padre once stopped before a dying Protestant soldier in order to minister to him. The boy looked up and said, "But, Padre, I don't belong to your church." "That may be," he replied, "but you belong to my God." This sense of God's reaching out to all, which these early Friends felt in the pre-incarnational and resurrected Christ, was immeasurably heightened in the incarnational Christ so that the conviction of God's caring and of this uncancellably belonging, this possession, this noose

of love with which God forever pursues us, which is the heart of the true evangelical message, is something given not only to those who use the right words, but to all men everywhere.

This instinct in early Friends that refused to separate the three forms of Christ but testified to the immediacy of their experience of this outpouring of God's overwhelming love in their souls which they recognized and acknowledged as his immediate revelation of himself, his inner Bethlehem, seems to me to be so sound that I query Maurice's expressing himself again in the terminology of orthodoxy and speaking of Christ as the "stumbling stone," while at the same time acknowledging the immediate experience of the eternal, the pre- and post-incarnational Christ as the mysterious activity at the ground of history and at the ground of our lives. I suspect that both these early Friends and Maurice himself have been taken beyond this existential cleft long before they return to try to describe it, and that their conceptualizations are far from adequate, as he himself admits, to the new condition that this immediacy has disclosed to them.

How many of these early Friends, like Isaac Penington, had already had an extensive experience with Puritan Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, to say nothing of more orthodox Anglicans, before they found release in the Friends' company? Christ as the stumbling stone, the depravity of man, the omnipotence of God, the mechanics of predestinarianism were all too familiar terms to them. But in this fresh experience they were swept beyond them into an area that made new language necessary. For the want of it, both they and almost every generation since them have, as Henry Cadbury has recently so accurately pointed out, relapsed into this earlier language when certain crises have been upon them. This makes Maurice's struggle for new language so important in our time. But he himself frequently suffers relapses into the language of orthodoxy in the course of this article, which betray the real frontier into which he seeks to move. The Quaker experience has transcended these dichotomies when it has been authentic and this has given it the immense enthusiastic freedom of Gospel-liberated Christians to reach out to others regardless of their professions. An unfriendly critic might suggest that Maurice in his longing to re-accent the historical element and to make sure that the Quaker experience

is authentic, has been betrayed into an orthodoxy of expression that ill suits his own Christian experience, and that far from restoring Quakerism to its true roots may end by delivering it up as just another Protestant sect. But both this paper and his other writings make it clear that this would not do him justice.

In conclusion I would suggest that until Maurice Creasey has carried out further his self-assignment in the early paragraphs of this paper to examine with care the real meaning of the Renaissance and the Reformation and has distinguished his own position from the implications of the Reformation which the receding wave of neo-orthodoxy has reasserted, he can never interpret the Quaker mutation in its fullness. To say that the most important result of the Renaissance and Reformation was the recovery of the central significance of Christ for Christian life, faith, and thought, and not to follow it with an exacting analysis of the rethinking of the relation of Christ to this turbulent re-assertion of the significance of man and of man's reason in this burgeoning universe which orthodox Protestant thought has still to face up to, is to leave us in confusion. To repudiate the thought of one Quaker mind, Rufus Jones, who began that process and to move about in Renaissance and in orthodox Protestant categories alternately is not enough. Until Maurice and others can help us with a new terminology to do justice to the immediacy of the Quaker experience of God in Christ and to a new conception of man which is implied in this experience and to a fresh approach to his fellows who may be in other religions or in no religion at all, we shall not do justice to the invitation which our precious Society's heritage makes to the peoples of the world to discover the universal character of Christ to which this Quaker experience of Christ witnesses.

Response to Comments

MAURICE A. CREASEY

I am grateful for my three friends who have commented on the article; and I am encouraged to find that there appears to be a substantial measure of unity among us concerning its central argument. The simplest course for me to follow at this point seems to be to reply, necessarily very briefly and inadequately, to some of the more important points raised. I do this in the order in which the comments reached me.

Harold Walker

I agree, of course, with the point Harold Walker is making in his fourth paragraph. A more accurate quotation from my article would have made it clear that I am speaking of Quaker *doctrine* and of the attempt to express in terms of *doctrine* insights which have been given us in the path of faithful obedience.

As to the use of the term "mystery," I use it partly because it is a New Testament word (e.g., Col. 1:27; 2:2) and partly because early Friends frequently used it to point the contrast with "history." Christ is and must ever be a "mystery" in the sense that his "riches" are "unsearchable" and that in him we are confronted with that which is ultimate: and can anything be more mysterious than our own "essence"?

With regard to what Harold Walker calls my "lumpy thinking" in the matter of the "two divergent directions" followed in different parts of our Society at different times—this is, of course, simply a very broad generalization and must not be taken to exclude the exceptions to which Harold Walker refers. But it contains, I believe, sufficient truth to warrant its use and its usefulness. I do not agree that this analysis implies that "there is little point of our continuing as a Society." Its true implication is, I suggest, that both "wings" of the Society need to enter into genuine conversation with each other, so as to ap-

preciate better the measure of truth which each so clearly sees, and also to see how each needs the other if its own emphases are not to become distortions.

Needless to say, I agree entirely that, "the desired renaissance of Quakerism will not be brought about by a better verbal formula . . . but by a quickened spiritual life that is wholly committed to Christ." I would only add, however, that two of the things which may be inhibiting the "quickened spiritual life" and "total commitment to Christ" are, (a) a widespread ignorance of what the source of early Friends' power really was, and, (b) the entertaining of false or inadequate ideas as to what the Christian and Quaker witness to Christ essentially is. So far as verbalisation is capable of helping dispel such ignorance or misunderstanding, its use is justified and obligatory.

Theodor Benfey

I had hoped that my article made it clear that I am not pleading that we should return to the thinking of the seventeenth century. Our first task is to take seriously the fact which this article sought to establish, namely, that the source of early Quaker power was a creative experience of and insight into the breadth and depth of the significance of Jesus Christ. Our second task must be, of course, the expression of this experience and insight in terms relevant to the contemporary situation. I see little hope, however, of our speaking relevantly to men's deepest needs today until we have grappled with the historical and theological questions which this article can do no more than raise.

In reply to Theodor Benfey's question, "Was all Quaker thought after 1700 really only a narrowing of focus?" I think I have to say, "Yes, so far as theological thinking about the meaning of Jesus Christ as the light that lighteth every man is concerned." John Wilhelm Rowntree was, I believe, broadly speaking, correct when he said that in the matter of the deep exploration of their faith, "Friends ceased to think in the seventeenth century."

Theodor Benfey notes as "the major lack" in my paper, "the complete absence of any account of Quaker teaching as to the origin of Jesus . . . and of the transformation . . . made possible

in other people through his life." In reply, I think it is fair to say that there has been little, if any, distinctive Quaker teaching as to the origin of Jesus, and I think that adequate discussion of Jesus' transformation of the lives of other people calls for a paper under quite a different title.

While accepting without reservation the fact that Jesus Christ was "a historical personality," I cannot agree that it must therefore follow that he "must be capable of being viewed . . . divorced from any interpretation we may give to him from a theological framework." All modern New Testament study has, surely, demonstrated the impossibility of reconstructing from the records a "purely historical" Jesus Christ who, by hypothesis, shall be different from the Jesus Christ who was the focus of Christian worship. And his saving power in the lives of men is not adequately accounted for, as Theodor Benfey seems to suggest, by the fact that he was "the first fully individual man, the first free personality in history." Rather, it was because in him the creative and redemptive power of God was uniquely encountered that his disciples found themselves drawn into a *koinonia* of unprecedented richness and depth.

Douglas Steere

There are two points on which I would like to comment. The first concerns what Douglas Steere has said about my attitude toward Rufus Jones. I confess to feeling regret that Douglas Steere should have introduced, in this manner and in the terms he used, into his comments on this paper a substantial discussion of a matter which does not arise directly out of the subject matter of the paper itself and to which I cannot reply adequately in the space at my disposal. But since he has done so, I may perhaps be permitted to say that it is quite inaccurate to speak of "my identifying Rufus Jones with the 'mystical' dilution of Quakerism," as if I had accused him of exercising a harmful influence on Quakerism.

As I had hoped my article made sufficiently clear, my argument is that Quakerism has tended, historically, to "bifurcate" in two different directions which, for convenience, may be described as that of "mysticism" and that of "evangelicalism." It has done so from very early time; and I am suggesting as an ex-

planation worthy of serious discussion that the reason for this is Quakerism's attempt to express a rich and profound insight into the very heart of the Christian revelation in terms of a concept, namely, that of the "inner light," which by itself, and insufficiently safeguarded and supplemented by the rich variety of New Testament teaching, is unable to bear the weight that has been placed upon it. My plea is that all of us who care deeply for the truth which Quakerism is trying to express, whichever of the two directions mentioned happens to be the more congenial to us, should make a determined effort to recover the comprehensive insight which alone is adequate to our needs. It is with such a background in mind that I feel it to be inappropriate to speak of my "selecting Rufus Jones as the adversary."

I have always had, and shall continue to have, the most grateful and affectionate respect for the life and teaching of that great man. I am not unaware of the historical background against which his interpretation of Quakerism must be seen; and I do indeed, as Douglas Steere rightly guessed, have the utmost unity with the interpretation of the significance of Jesus Christ which Douglas Steere quotes at length from Rufus Jones.

But the fact remains that these are *not* the terms in which Jesus Christ would be described by a not inconsiderable number of Friends today, and that they would probably justify their refusal to employ such language by an appeal to what they understand to be "the Quaker outlook." The purpose of my paper is precisely to establish the position that such an interpretation is in fact the foundation upon which Quakerism historically *was* founded and upon which, in my judgment, it can alone usefully survive.

My second point concerns Douglas Steere's final paragraph. No one is more acutely aware than I am of the magnitude of the task of historical and theological identification which confronts us as Friends. And no one is more conscious than I of the fact that the present paper represents only a small contribution towards establishing a point of approach. But I do not feel that even this small contribution is fairly described in such terms as, "repudiating the thought of one Quaker mind . . ." and "moving about in Renaissance and in orthodox Protestant categories alternately." I do not fear or deplore as Douglas Steere seems to

do "relapses into the language of orthodoxy," if this "orthodoxy" is that of the New Testament. There is, of course, an orthodoxy of mere convention; but there is also an orthodoxy of honest conviction; and I am not entirely convinced that those Friends who are impatient of "orthodox" language concerning Jesus Christ always recognize this distinction or are willing to accept the spiritual and intellectual discipline which might lead them to the discovery that such language may be profoundly meaningful in our experience even today.

The task which Douglas Steere outlines is indeed one which exceeds the grasp of any single student; and no one will be happier than the writer of this paper if the very inadequacies of treatment which may be detected in it have the effect of stimulating other students to accept a share of the labor and responsibility involved in what must necessarily be a corporate effort of discovery and expression.

Contributors

Maurice A. Creasey, Director of Studies in Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, England, since 1953 is particularly well qualified to write the lead article in this issue since his dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Leeds University was on the subject, *Early Quaker Christology.* He is Clerk of London Yearly Meeting's Committee on Christian Relationships and a member of the World Council of Churches' Theological Commission on Christ and the Church. He visited the United States in 1957 to attend the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission meetings, and lectured that summer in the Pendle Hill Summer School. He is co-author of the pamphlet, *The Next Fifty Years,* and is author of numerous articles.

Harold E. Walker is pastor of the First Friends Church in Whittier, California. Canadian by birth, he took his Bachelor of Arts degree from Whittier College and his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He has held pastorates of Friends churches in California and Massachusetts and was at one time pastor of Friends University in Wichita, Kansas. He attended the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, Holland, and recently led a travel tour to the Holy Land.

O. Theodor Benfey is professor of chemistry in Earlham College. German by birth, he was educated in England, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry from University College, London. He taught for a number of years in the department of chemistry of Haverford College. He has written many articles in the field of chemistry and has contributed articles to various Friends journals.

Douglas V. Steere, professor of philosophy at Haverford College where he was formerly associated with Rufus M. Jones, has been active in many Friends activities for many years. He is author of several books including, *Time to Spare, Work and Contemplation, On Listening to Another,* and *Doors into Life.*.. He is a frequent contributor to Friends journals and to other religious publications. He is a member of many Friends committees and chairman of the Board of Pendle Hill. Many persons recognize in him a leader in the religious retreat movement in this country.

OTHER AVAILABLE ISSUES OF

Quaker Religious Thought

Volume I, Number 1, Spring 1959 — Price 50¢

The Quaker Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

By Howard H. Brinton

Comments by: Lewis Benson, Thomas S. Brown, and Charles F. Thomas

---

Volume II, Number 1, Spring 1960 — Price 75¢

The Early Quaker Vision of the Church — By Lewis Benson

Comments by: Henry J. Cadbury, T. Canby Jones, and D. Elton Trueblood

---

Volume II, Number 2, Fall 1960 — Price 75¢

Quaker Perspectives on the Nature of Man

By Wilmer A. Cooper

Comments by: A. Burns Chalmers, Edna M. Hall, and Duane Moon

To be obtained from the Circulation Manager.

---

printed by

The Hemlock Press

R. D., Alburtis, Pennsylvania